



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of June 19, 2002
3:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC
County Commissioners' Briefing Room (Blue Room)
Old Guilford County Courthouse

TAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Carmany
Mayor Keith Holliday
Robbie Perkins
Bob Landreth
Mary Rakestraw

TAC Chair, Greensboro City Council
Greensboro City Council
Greensboro City Council
Guilford County Commission
Guilford County Commission

ATTENDANCE

Jim Westmoreland	TCC Chair/GDOT	James Upchurch	NCDOT, Statewide Planning
Tyler Meyer	GDOT	Tom Martin	Greensboro Planning Dept.
Craig McKinney	GDOT	Patty Eason	NCDOT, Division 7
Bruce Adams	GTA	Thomas F. Brown	Mayor, Town of Oak Ridge
Eddie McFalls	Earth Tech, Inc.	Missy Dickens	NCDOT, Project Dev.
Jeff Sovich	GDOT	Toby Linville	Oak Ridge Town Clerk
Scott Rhine	PART	Jim Ayers	Mayor, Town of Pleasant Garden
Mike Mills	NCDOT	Jerry Dudeck	NCDOT, Statewide Planning
Libby James	GTA		

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at approximately 3:08 p.m.

Action Items

1. Approval of Minutes of April 17, 2002

Robbie Perkins moved for the approval of the April 17, 2002 minutes. Bob Landreth seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

2. Amend Public Transportation Element of 2002 –2008 MTIP

Jeff Sovich informed the Committee that this amendment is intended to reprogram the total 5307 funds for GTA. The amendment shifts all 5307 funds that were previously programmed for planning and capital expenses into operating expenses. The shift is needed greater operating expenses than were originally anticipated. The operating expenses, as estimated by the contractor and as initially shown in GTA's budget, were lower than the amount actually billed.

He advised that the NCDOT has also allocated an additional \$2.2 million in 5307 funds for GTA, allowing the purchase of ten replacement vans and 10 replacement buses. These were two previously unfunded projects. The requested action is to recommend approval by the TAC.

Robbie Perkins moved for the approval of the amendment. Bob Landreth seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Libby James informed the Committee that the additional funds would purchase the remaining ten vans and ten buses needed to complete GTA's replacement cycle. Jim Westmoreland asked when the new buses would arrive. Libby James advised the first ten would go on the production line in September. After the grant application is submitted, the second ten vehicles will be added to the additional production and all twenty vehicles will be received at the same time. Robbie Perkins asked what the local match would be on the twenty vehicles. Libby James stated that the cost of the ten vehicles is \$280,000. Jim Westmoreland added that the local match amount is 10%.

3. Amend Highway Element of 2002 – 2008 MTIP

Jeff Sovich advised the Committee that NCDOT requested that the MTIP be amended to add the Traffic System Operations Program, project R-4701. After a review study by NCDOT staff, it was determined that new funding has not been made available for signal system maintenance for fifteen years.

This project was approved at the March Board of Transportation meeting, and would fund signal system maintenance statewide. It establishes performance standards, as well as preventive maintenance goals and includes flexibility for introducing new technologies as they arise. It programs a total of \$132 million into the TIP over the next eight fiscal years with \$85.8 million of that total available during the 2002-2008 MTIP. Greensboro's allocation is not yet known.

Jim Westmoreland commented that Troy Peoples, State Traffic Engineer, was involved in looking at schedules C and D, which are maintenance reimbursement schedules for state traffic signals inside municipalities. This item sets into place the funding mechanism to have the divisions work directly with the municipalities, either to establish local agreements for signal system maintenance, or to revise schedules C and D to put that into motion.

Sandy Carmany asked for a motion to amend the highway element of the 2002-2008 MTIP. Robbie Perkins moved to amend the highway element. Mayor Keith Holliday seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

4. Review Job Access and Reverse Commute Grant Application

Jeff Sovich advised the Committee that the JARC program funds several projects that provide reliable employment transportation for individuals who otherwise might not have the opportunity. GTA's proposal expands the Career Express shuttle service, which provides job transportation to the airport area. The expansion that GTA is proposing would add weekend service to the Career Express shuttle. Bruce Adams advised that the current monthly level of ridership is 3,800. The total project cost for the grant is \$301,342, and GTA is required to match 50% of that amount. The duration of the grant is two years.

Mayor Keith Holliday asked when the decision to award the grant would be received. Bruce Adams advised that it would be October of 2002. Robbie Perkins asked what the cost per passenger is. Bruce Adams advised that the cost is \$10.39 per passenger and a \$4.00 fare for the total trip. He commented that there would be marketing regarding the program, but word-of-mouth would be the best advertisement.

Jim Westmoreland also commented that preliminary discussions have been made with PART concerning coordinating efforts for the start of regional bus service in the fall. He also commented that GTA is working with the universities in the community regarding the creation of a local university connector service. Robbie Perkins commented that there would need to be a connector serving the airport area as well, once Federal Express completes its expansion activities. Mayor Keith Holliday asked for the percentage of people occupying the buses versus non-occupancy of the buses. Bruce Adams advised that the percentage is 85% during the morning and afternoon peak hours going out to the connector hub at the airport area.

Sandy Carmany asked for a motion to approve the JARC grant application. Bob Landreth moved to approve. Mayor Keith Holliday seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

5. Endorse Enhancement Project Applications

Tyler Meyer informed the Committee that the NCDOT administers the enhancement projects as a competitive grant program. These federally funded grants are intended to cover non-traditional projects such as bike paths, sidewalks, scenic beautification, and historic depot renovations. Projects from the MPO area that are eligible for the grant award must receive the endorsement of the MPO in order to be considered for funding.

The first project, requested and sponsored by the Town of Oak Ridge, will landscape the traffic islands at the intersection of NC 68 and 150. The requested amount is \$9,200, which is 80% of the total project cost. Meyer noted this as a commendable project and that the Mayor and Clerk of Oak Ridge were present.

The second project, requested and sponsored by the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department, supports Phase I of the Southeast Pedestrian Connector. This facility will be a combination sidewalk and off-road trail connecting neighborhoods, school, parks, and other pedestrian destinations. The cost of this project is \$66,000. The department is requesting 80% of the total cost.

The third project requested by Greensboro Department of Transportation is to construct six and a half miles of transit-oriented sidewalks on major roadways around the city. Projects that are included are sidewalks along West Market Street and Guilford College Road. The total cost of this set of projects is \$679,000. The Greensboro Department of Transportation is requesting an 80% match at \$543,200. The goal is to leverage federal funds to support the project.

Toby Linville commented that the Oak Ridge Beautification Committee had been working on the Oak Ridge project for two years. They have spoken with the NCDOT regarding the various types of plants that would be used. They would need a planting agreement from the NCDOT. The Beautification Committee has received a quote from a local landscaper, which should be adequate for the grant.

Mary Rakestraw asked that since Oak Ridge was the sponsor, whether that meant the town had brought the request forward. Toby Linville advised that a local government has to sign-off on the grant. Tyler Meyer advised that Oak Ridge plans to provide the local match as well as sponsor the project.

Sandy Carmany asked for a motion to endorse the enhancement project applications. Robbie Perkins moved to endorse the applications. Mayor Keith Holliday seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Business Items

1. High Point Road Project Update

Eddie McFalls, of Earth Tech, Inc. advised the Committee that when completed, project U-2412 would provide a multi-lane facility from High Point into Greensboro. The project begins in High Point on Greensboro Road. The final decision on which alternative will be selected will be made after a public hearing in the fall.

McFalls advised that Alternative 2 would widen High Point Road to a four-lane divided facility from the beginning of the project to west of Hardy Road. Section C is the area of the project within Greensboro. The entire project is estimated to cost \$124 million, and is anticipated to relocate 76 residences and 32 businesses.

He also advised the reason that Alternative 2 would be chosen is due to the fact that the Jefferson Pilot property is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This status provides protection under Section 4F of the USDOT Act, which requires that it must be avoided unless there are no other feasible alternatives. Alternative 2 avoids impact to this historic property and the Sedgfield Historic District. This project will also have to meet the current watershed protection regulations, but any variance that may be needed cannot be requested until the final alternative has been selected.

The re-evaluations of the environmental studies for this project should be complete this summer with the public hearing being held in the fall. Missy Dickens commented that the re-evaluations indicate that nothing has significantly changed since the Draft EIS was written in the early '90s. McFalls advised that once the revisions and changes have been completed, the draft would then be circulated among other NCDOT units and the Federal Highway Administration for their comments. Pending approval of

this reevaluation, FHWA and NCDOT state whether the original Draft EIS is still appropriate for the project. Once the draft has been approved, a combined public hearing would be held in the fall of this year. The reason for the combined hearing is to show both the design level information and the right-of-way width impact for the corridors. Eddie McFalls advised that Alternative 2 would probably be the alternative that is chosen as the preferred corridor.

He advised that the right-of-way acquisition is scheduled to begin 2005 on the section from US 311 to Manor Drive and 2006 from Manor Drive up to Stanford and Guilford College Road. Then from Stanford Road and Guilford College Road to Hilltop Road, the completion is scheduled for 2008.

He informed the Committee of the construction cost for the project. The project would cost a total of \$124 million, roughly \$80 million for construction and \$40 million for right-of-way acquisition.

Robbie Perkins asked how traffic would be entering and exiting High Point Road onto the Urban Loop. Eddie McFalls advised that the High Point Road interchange with the Loop would be completed after the Loop itself is constructed.

Mayor Keith Holliday asked if the City of Greensboro could pay for the section in front of Jefferson Road and apply for the federal dollars for the remainder of that section. Missy Dickens advised that this issue was discussed in recent years and it could be challenged in court for trying to segment the project in order to avoid 4F. If someone did challenge that, the state would be at risk. Missy Dickens advised that it was this same type of conversation in the past years that caused the project to be delayed for several years. Mike Mills stated that this section of the Urban Loop should be completed in 2006.

Mike Mills suggested speaking with Doug Galyon and Calvin Leggett to discuss whether the project can be accelerated so that the Loop and the High Point Road interchange open at or close to the same time.

Missy Dickens will contact Tyler Meyer at a later date with further information on possible acceleration of the project.

2. Highway Trust Funds, TEA-21, and RABA Update

Jeff Sovich advised that in 1999 the state legislature established a Transportation Finance Committee. The committee was established to review all areas of transportation funding issues in the state. One of their findings was that additional transportation investment of \$1 million per year was needed in the state for continued economic growth. They recommended eliminating money transfers from the Highway Trust Fund to the general fund. Jeff Sovich informed the Committee that the Highway Trust Fund Study Commission was established last September by the state legislature to review issues related to transportation funding sources in the state. Their authorization expired in April before the commission had a chance to meet. The 2002 budget legislation reauthorized the commission. The Board of Transportation adopted a resolution on May 2nd that requests the Trust Fund Study Commission to make a recommendation as quickly as possible regarding flexibility and use of highway trust funds.

Each year the Revenue Aligned Budget Authority sets the total amount of federal transportation funding based on the revenues that will be received during that year for transportation. RABA is expected to cut \$192 million out of the state's federal transportation funding for the fiscal year 2003. However, recently revised estimates of transportation revenues indicate that the TEA-21 guaranteed funding level could be

met or exceeded with the revenue that had been received so far. The Highway Funding Restoration Act, currently before congress, would reinstate approximately \$108 million to the state's federal transportation funding for fiscal year 2003.

Sandy Carmany commented that the Committee received a response from Senator Edwards concerning the April resolution supporting the Highway Funding Restoration Act. The letter conveys the Senator's agreement. A response was received from Senator Helm's assistant, who commented that Senator Helms is recovering from surgery, and he would give the Committee a response at a later date.

Jeff Sovich advised that TEA-21 would expire on September 30th of 2003. Accordingly, the process is already underway to reauthorize federal transportation legislation. Interest groups and legislators will be introducing proposals during this summer and fall. In January, the Bush administration will be unveiling its proposal. As the process goes on, TEA-21 may need to be extended, just as ISTEA was while TEA-21 was being prepared. The reauthorization is important because this will set the level of highway and transit funding throughout the country and North Carolina for the next six-year period and will establish the rules and parameters in which our MPO will conduct its planning activities.

The key issues from the MPO perspective that will be considered by the legislature in this reauthorization process are: synchronization between the conformity process and the long range planning process; mechanisms for reducing volatility of annual funding levels caused by RABA; and establishing direct sub-allocations of CMAQ funds to MPOs that are air quality non-attainment areas.

Mayor Keith Holliday stated that he has had several concerns brought to his attention concerning the construction repair work on US 29. Concerns have been raised by Rockingham County commuters whose travel time to Greensboro has significantly increased.. He asked if this area of construction could be divided into segments to reduce the impact. Mike Mills stated that if they did the repair in segments, it would take longer to complete the repairs. He also advised that the barricades are in place only when the contractor is working.

Mayor Holliday asked if the repaving on Friendly Avenue from Ham's to the hospital was being completed by the Greensboro Department of Transportation. Jim Westmoreland responded that the Greensboro Department of Transportation is responsible for that project. Mayor Holliday asked if the middle section of the highway, which has not been resurfaced, could be resurfaced to make it all look the same in appearance. Jim Westmoreland said he would check into the situation and report back to the Mayor.

3. TMA Designation Issues

Tyler Meyer observed that Census 2000 results show that the Greensboro Urbanized Area population increased 45% (to 267,000) between 1990 and 2000, while total land area within the UZA increased 93% to 158 square miles. He advised that Greensboro has a larger share of dense urban census blocks compared to Winston-Salem and Asheville. He commented that Greensboro has done the best job of the three in terms of maintaining a compact development pattern, which land-use planners would consider favorable. But in terms of funding allocations, this achievement doesn't work to our advantage. Practically speaking, more of Greensboro's peripheral, low density development is outside of its Urbanized Area, whereas a greater prevalence of low-density leap-frog development has been included within the Urbanized Areas of other MPOs such as Winston-Salem and Asheville.

Due to the census results, the Greensboro urbanized area now includes areas within the boundary of the High Point MPO, including parts of Jamestown. While these areas may be included in the MPO area as a result of consultation with NCDOT and High Point, this is not required since areas included in an urbanized area must be served by an MPO, but necessarily the one in which they are located. Further action will be required only if the MPO elects to make adjustments to the metropolitan area boundary.

Because Greensboro now has a UZA population of over 200,000, it is designated as a Transportation Management Area by the USDOT. This designation raises a series of challenges, but also provides opportunities for the MPO. The annual self-certification of MPO performance will be supplemented by a triennial certification review, in which teams of FHWA and FTA reviewers will meet with TCC and TAC members, examine records, hold a public meeting, and take other steps as warranted to determine whether the planning process meets applicable requirements.

Another consequence of TMA designation is that Greensboro will be required to develop a Congestion Management System. The CMS is a tool used to study traffic congestion on area roadways to evaluate alternative strategies for reducing congestion and to provide a justification for including new roadway capacity projects in the Long Range Transportation Plan.

TMA status also brings changes for transit planning functions. GTA will have a direct relationship with the FTA, and funds will be limited as to the types of expenses they may be used for. Greensboro will also no longer be eligible for state discretionary fund allocations.

As a TMA, the Greensboro MPO also has the opportunity to direct the allocation of STP-DA funds apportioned to the area. Discussions are ongoing with the NCDOT regarding the implications of this STP-DA authority; further information will be provided as it becomes available.

Taken as a whole, TMA designation raises the standards the MPO must meet, but at the same time, it positions Greensboro to have a more influential role in the transportation planning process.

Update on Draft 2004-2010 MTIP

Tyler Meyer advised that the draft Statewide Transportation Improvement Program has been released. The final state TIP will be adopted next summer. The Highway Trust Fund provides approximately 50% of programmed funds for the Greensboro area, while Federal Aid funds provide the bulk of the other 50%. The Surface Transportation Program and National Highway System programs make up the majority of programmed federal aid funds. Construction has the largest share of the total budget at nearly 80%, while right-of-way acquisition and operations account for roughly 15% and 5% respectively. Excluding post-years, Greensboro's overall TIP funding has increased from \$551 million under the 2002-2008 MTIP to \$873 million under the 2004-2010 MTIP. This funding increase appears to be primarily related to Highway Trust Fund projects, including the acceleration of the Eastern Urban Loop and the advancement of the NC 68/US 220 Connector into the program for right-of-way acquisition. Federal-aid funds have increased 30% since the last TIP.

Three major new projects have been added in the draft TIP: the Battleground Rail Trail, funded through discretionary enhancement funds by the NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Division; the resurfacing project on US 29 between Sixteenth Street and the Rockingham County Line; and the construction of five park and ride lots to support regional transit service.

The Greensboro Eastern Urban Loop has been accelerated, and will now be constructed within the TIP period, with construction starting in 2008 between US 70 and US 29 and in 2009 between US 29 and Lawndale Drive.

The timeframes of several projects in the TIP have been delayed due to various project development setbacks, while other projects have been intentionally pushed back to facilitate balancing of available funds.

Jim Westmoreland asked Mike Mills when the I-40 interchange at Gallimore Dairy Road would be complete. Mills responded that the ramps should be open by the latter part of this year, at which time the Chimney Rock Road interchange will be permanently closed. According to the contractors, all lanes from Gallimore Dairy Road, east are scheduled to be complete by the end of this year.

Tyler Meyer also informed the Committee that none of the roadway projects from the priority needs list had been added to the TIP. Only public transportation projects and the Battleground Rail Trail have been added to the draft TIP so far. The signal system replacement project feasibility study, which has already been completed is still listed in the draft TIP as being in progress.

5. Other Strategic Reports

Sandy Carmany informed the Committee concerning the recent symposium that she attended in Boston. Elected officials who attended the meeting deal with MPOs and land use planning. She advised that under the Maryland Smart Growth Program, when reviewing possible construction of a highway or road, it is determined up front whether it is to serve bypass transportation purposes or is to be an economic stimulus. If the decision is for transportation, 100 feet of right-of-way is purchased on both sides of the roadway to make certain it remains a viable transportation corridor. She also advised that a symposium for state departments of transportation would be offered at a later date.

Tyler Meyer told the Committee that the US 29 interchange study is listed in the TIP and arrangements have been made to split the cost between Greensboro and the state. The Pegg/Thatcher Feasibility Study is listed in the draft TIP. NCDOT will conduct that study in-house. The time line for completion of this study is one year. The Battleground Avenue Feasibility Study was placed on the priority needs list as a proposal for a future study. This study is not listed in the TIP. Further developments on this study will be reported as they occur. He spoke briefly about ozone season and its significance in the transportation planning process. CMAQ funds, along with the air quality awareness program is responsible for making air quality notices available.

Other Items

1. Board Member Update

Mike Mills updated the Committee on the progress being made on I-40. The project should be complete this year. The section at NC 68 is scheduled to be complete in November or December of this year. He informed the Committee that the construction at Gallimore Dairy Road should be completed next summer.

2. Town Reports

None.

3. Regional Update

Scott Rhine stated that the work programs are making progress. The regional bus program is scheduled to open in the fall of this year. The rail activity studies are also progressing. The results should be available for the Rail Committee later this summer, and the planning process of that project should be started in fiscal year 2003. He also advised the Committee that the pilot project kick-off would be held on June 25, 2002, to which TAC members and Commissioners received an invitation. This meeting will address the medical transportation network pilot project. Sandy Carmany advised that the program is being funded by grants from NCDOT and the Winston-Salem foundation and that applications have been submitted with the Greensboro community foundation, as well as with High Point.

Wrap Up

Jim Westmoreland advised that meetings would be held with council members to discuss with them proposed sidewalk ordinance changes in Greensboro.

The TAC adjourned at 4:49 p.m.